DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 242 292 EC 162 197

TITLE	The Mentally Retarded Worker: An Economic Discovery. Report to the President. 14th Annual Report.
INSTITUTION	President's Committee on Mental Retardation, Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO	DHHS-OHDS-83-21031
PUB DATE	83
NOTE	34p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Employer Attitudes; *Employer Employee Relationship; Employment Experience; *Employment Opportunities; *Employment Potential; Job Training; *Mental Retardation

ABSTRACT

The booklet examines potential contributions that can be made by mentally retarded workers and exposes common misconceptions about their employability. Initial sections introduce the nature of retardation and describe real-life situations showing economic benefits of employment to employers, taxpayers, and retarded persons themselves. Among the myths exposed are requirements for extra training, declines in productivity, increased injuries, difficulties with absenteeism and turnover, and requirements for extensive architectural modifications. Specific recommendations for increasing employment in this population are directed toward six groups (sample recommendations in parentheses): employers (subcontract work for sheltered employment); teachers, trainers, and program administrators (develop functional and relevant curricula); job development and placement specialists (provide adequate follow-up services); parents (maintain high expectations); mentally retarded persons (ascertain sources of help on the job); and federal, state, and local government staff (reduce lack of incentive for employment). (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED243292

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- [x] This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- [ ] Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

EC 162197

In Memorium

This report is dedicated to Mattie A. Smith; a free spirited concerned employee of the President's Committee on Mental Retardation for over 12 years. Her enthusiasm and dedication to others will remain with us for many years.

PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON MENTAL RETARDATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Office of Human Development Services
Washington, D.C. 20201

Report to the President

The Mentally Retarded Worker An Economic Di$covery

DHHS Publication No. (OHDS) 83-21031

PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE ON MENTAL RETARDATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Office of Human Development Services
Washington, D.C. 20201

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am pleased to transmit the 14th Annual Report of the President's Committee on Mental Retardation titled, The Mentally Retarded Worker: An Economic Discovery. In keeping with their purpose, this report addresses a specific concern: the training and employment of retarded citizens. It shows how business and retarded workers can mutually benefit.

Given training and employment, retarded citizens, once thought of as being dependent for life, can reach increased levels of social and economic independence, which may equal those of average citizens. To the businessman, the retarded employee is often the preferred employee because of job dedication, low absenteeism and turnover rates, and willingness to perform jobs that seasoned workers refuse. Wage subsidies and tax credits provide added incentives.

The report includes employer and trainer testimony. It will help employers identify retarded persons as capable workers. It will assist retarded people to reach higher levels of self-sufficiency through employment. It will also assist parents and facilitators to support the retarded person's job search. To this end, it offers guidance to employers, professionals, parents, retarded citizens, and the general population.

Respectfully yours,

Richard S. Schweiker
Chairman

Executive Summary

The goal of this year's report is to increase the awareness of the private sector to the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of mentally retarded people who are employable but are unemployed because of misconceptions about their abilities to meet and maintain employment standards. These misconceptions held by some employers, placement officers, trainers and parents may lead to a life of underachievement, idleness and public dependency. Yet the overwhelming evidence shows that mentally retarded persons can be productive members of the nation's workforce and quite often are considered preferred workers.

The report dispels these myths and encourages employment. Its objective is to educate the private sector, while providing continued guidance to the traditional audience of students, parents, advocates, mental retardation professionals and the general population.

The first section introduces the subject, discusses retardation and describes why the mentally retarded worker is an economic discovery.

By presenting a series of misconceptions of employers, section two delineates major obstacles faced by mentally retarded persons who attempt to secure employment. These misconceptions are countered by actual testimony from employers who have profited from hiring people who are mentally retarded.

Section three identifies training and employment issues and recommends changes for the 80's. Guidelines are offered to employers, trainers, parents of mentally retarded persons and policymakers.

The final section presents an optimistic look at the future in terms of job opportunities for all citizens.

President's Committee on Mental Retardation

The Honorable Richard S. Schweiker *Chairperson*
Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services

Elsie D. Helsel, Ph.D. *Vice-Chairperson*

Citizen Members
Mrs. Kathleen M. Barrett
Richard E. Blanton, Ph.D.
Lee A. Christoferson, M.D.
Dorothy Corbin Clark, R.N.
Mrs. Vicki M. Click
Thomas J. Farrell
Vincent C. Gray
Elsie D. Helsel, Ph.D.
Lawrence A. Kane, Jr.
Richard J. Kogan
James L. Kuebelbeck
Ms. Donna Beth Macy
Timothy J. O'Brien
Raymond, M. Peterson, M.D.
Frederick J. Rose
Mrs. Anne C. Seggerman
Mrs. Marguerite T. Shine
Mrs. Lila Thompson
Mrs. Virginia J. Thornburgh
Ruth Warson, R.N.

Ex-Officio Members
Attorney General
Secretary of Labor
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development
Director, ACTION

PCMR Staff
Fred J. Krause *Executive Director*
Miss Linda C. Bass
Mrs. Nancy O. Borders
George N. Bouthilet, Ph.D.
Mrs. Frances Bynoe
Mrs. Beverly Cannon
Mrs. Jan Kirby-Gell
Ashot Mnatzakanian
Mrs. Essie Norkin
Mrs. Laverdia Taylor-Roach
Miles B. Santamour
Mrs. Katherine Smith
M. Mark Snyderman
David J. Touch
Miss Terry A. Visek

Table of Contents

(1) **Introduction** 1

(2) **Who are the Mentally Retarded People** 3

(3) **Why is a Mentally Retarded Worker an Economic Discovery** 4

To the Taxpayers
To the Employer
To the Mentally Retarded Person

(4) **Myths and Facts About Employing Retarded Workers** 6

Training
Productivity
Accidents and Insurance
Absenteeism
Turnover
Supervision
Job Modifications

(5) **Avenues to Employment: Guidelines** 13

For Employers
For Teachers, Trainers, Program Administrators
For Job Development and Placement Specialists
For Parents
For Mentally Retarded Persons
For Federal, State and Local Governments

(6) **Post Script: The Future** 25

Introduction

Mr. President:

A most exhilarating life experience is having your worth recognized by receiving your first paycheck, but hundreds of thousands of mentally retarded people will never experience this. They are unemployed because of misconceptions about their abilities to meet and maintain employment standards. These misconceptions (held by some employers, placement officers, trainers, and parents) may lead to underachivement, idleness, and public dependency. Yet overwhelming evidence shows that mentally retarded persons can be productive workers.

This year's report dispels these myths and encourages employment. Its objective is to educate the private sector, while providing continued guidance to the traditional audience of students, parents, advocates, mental retardation professionals, and the general population.

The first section introduces the subject, discusses retardation, and describes why the retarded worker is an economic discovery. By presenting a series of misconceptions employers have, section two delineates major obstacles faced by retarded persons who attempt employment. These misconceptions are countered by testimony from employers who have profited from hiring people who are mentally retarded.

Section three identifies training and employment issues and recommends changes for the '80s. Guidelines are offered to employers, trainers, parents, mentally retarded persons, and policymakers. Many recommendations come from the recent National Working Conference on Vocational and Employment Opportunities for Mentally Retarded Citizens, which was sponsored by the President's Committee on Mental Retardation, the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, the Association for Retarded Citizens, and the University of Wisconsin Research and Training Center. It brought together leaders in the field to discuss the topic and formulate strategies for the future.

Employment of all citizens has long been recognized as a national goal. Too often, the mentally retarded person is considered disabled. We have attempted to demonstrate that it is this assumption, rather than any specific disability, which represents the major impediment to employment. By bringing this matter to your attention, we hope to correct the situation and to expand employment opportunities for mentally retarded people.

Who Are Mentally Retarded People?

Compared with the athletic prowess of an O. J. Simpson, the social savoir faire of a Perle Mesta, the economic adroitness of a J. Paul Getty or the survival skills of a Robinson Crusoe, we are all retarded

The gap between the retarded person and the nonretarded person may or may not be as great as the comparisons just drawn. However, to understand the nature of retardation, it is important to realize that each of us has varying degrees of abilities. Few persons possess the physical attributes that would produce an O. J. Simpson. Yet we all can substantially increase our abilities, given proper mind set, training, encouragement, and rewards.

While not necessarily reaching average levels of development in all areas of functioning, mentally retarded people are more like than unlike other people. The difference is that their intellectual and social development lags behind that of the general population.

A consequence of this developmental lag is a prolonged dependency upon others. Viewed thusly, mental retardation may be defined as a problem of dependency that affects all aspects of life: physical, cognitive, economic, and social. Dependency's cost to society is high, but higher yet to mentally retarded citizens. Without assistance, this citizen may become trapped in a debilitating cycle of economic and social dependence. Although we cannot cure mental retardation, we can reduce the effects of dependence. With proper social and vocational training and job placements, most of them can compete in employment.

Nearly 6 million Americans are mentally retarded with I.Q.'s of 70 or below. Experience has taught us that I.Q. is not basic to their employability. While I.Q. may have a bearing on choice of profession, a low I.Q. does not preclude employment. This report explores ways in which mentally retarded persons can achieve economic independence, thereby increasing their sense of self worth, and their acceptance by other members of society.

Why Is a Mentally Retarded Worker an "Economic Discovery?"

In scattered U.S. communities hundred of thousands of capable adults are unable to find jobs. Neither willingness to work nor job opportunity is the problem. These people need only short term training and guidance to advance from dependence to productivity. These are the mentally retarded whose vocational potential has been demonstrated repeatedly, yet who remain largely untapped as an economic resource. Developing this resource could constitute an economic discovery to many people in many ways:

To the Taxpayers. Each mentally retarded worker represents an average savings of $29,200.00 per year in support payments if habilitated in a public institution. Additionally, he contributes $530.00 tax dollars yearly to the general revenues. Instead of depending upon parental and public support, the mentally retarded worker lightens the economic burdens of both. Of equal importance, to invest in vocational training is wise. Once employed, a mentally retarded person, will repay $1.00 for every $1.00 spent to train him in only about 4 years. Thereafter, the repayment benefit will be greater than habilitation cost. Lifetime earnings will improve by $10.40 for every dollar spent on his vocational rehabilitation.*

To the Employer. Hiring mentally retarded workers can result in lower costs and higher profits. Costs are reduced in the following ways:

☐ *Training:* Seldom can an employer hire a worker already fully trained for a specific job. Yet many schools and rehabilitation agencies do provide a ready source of such workers. At no cost to the employer, a mentally retarded person can be trained, placed, and even monitored by the school or service agency.

This is of particular value in occupations plagued by high worker turnover and concurrent high training costs. Add to this the fact that the rate of turnover among mentally retarded workers is less than that of the general population, and the definition of these workers as an "economic discovery" becomes clear.*

*U.S. Department of Education, OSER, RSA, Economic Gains, July 7, 1982.

**Equal to the Task.* 1981 Dupont Survey of Employment of the Handicapped.

☐ *Reduction of Waste:* Training costs are not the only savings, however. Many organizations have found that creating new programs for mentally retarded workers can reduce waste and generate substantial savings. Take, for example, the case of the Naval Air Re-Work Facility in Pensacola, Florida. The cost of mechanics employed to disassemble aircraft at the facility is too high to allow for the time-consuming work of salvaging nuts, bolts, and other small parts. In the past, these parts were discarded. Recognizing the inherent waste in this system, representatives of the facility contacted the local vocational rehabilitation service. Through their cooperative efforts, the Reclamation Shop was born. Following job specific training by vocational rehabilitation personnel, mentally retarded persons were employed to salvage and sort parts. The benefits to the retarded employee cannot be measured solely in dollars and cents, but the benefits to the facility can and they are considerable. According to Marge Sanders, of the facility's public relations department: "Even after wages are paid to the employees, the Reclamation Shop saves us between $10-$15,000 per month."

☐ *Financial Incentives:* As if the savings in training and waste reduction are not incentive enough, the federal government may reimburse employers for doing themselves the favor of hiring mentally retarded people. Reimbursements may be through either tax credits or employment and training subsidies. Wages paid to many mentally retarded workers qualify for a targeted jobs tax credit. When eligible, an employer may take a credit of up to $3,000.00 for each targeted employee's first year wages, and up to $1,500.00 for each targeted employee's second year wages.*

Wage subsidies are often available to those who hire the mentally retarded. A frequent source of such subsidies is the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) On-The-Job Training Program. With Department of Labor funds, ARC reimburses employers for 50% of the entry wage during the first 160 hours of employment, and 25% of the wage during the next 160 hours.

☐ ***To the Mentally Retarded Person.*** Employment offers an escape from the debilitating cycle of economic and social dependency. A job which provides economic independence may provide social independence and subsequent residential independence. Society measures the benefits of this independence in terms of reduced dependency costs. The mentally retarded worker measures the benefits in terms of economic freedom and a newly found sense of pride and accomplishment. An opportunity for employment is truly an economic discovery for a mentally retarded person. More important, perhaps, it is a self-discovery as well.

*Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, *Targeted Jobs, WIN, and Research Credits.* Pub. 906 (Revised Nov. '81).

Myths and Facts About Employing Retarded Workers

If mentally retarded workers are an "economic discovery," why then are they not employed? A major obstacle is their being stereotyped as unproductive workers. A Los Angeles study asked employers to rank various groups in the order in which they believed other firms would be most likely to hire them. The mentally retarded and mentally ill were least desirable, ranking behind alcoholics, older workers, and ex-offenders.*

Mentally retarded workers will not achieve their employment potential unless these stereotypes are destroyed. An effective way of re-educating employers is through the experiences of their fellow businessmen.

Here is what some experienced employers have to say in answer to common misconceptions about mentally retarded workers:

MYTH: ***TRAINING***

"Sure, I think mentally retarded people deserve jobs, but I run a business. I can't afford the extra time it would take to train them."

FACT:

Mr. I. J. Profaci, Vice President, East Wind Industries, Clayton, Delaware, states, "In 1975, a staff member at a state institution asked me to hire a mentally retarded person. 'Absolutely not,' I said. But he was persistent, and I agreed. It turned out to be the best move I ever made. Once employers realize that these people are dedicated and well trained, they'll change their minds too."

One thing that helped change Mr. Profaci's mind was the On-The-Job Training Program of the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC). Following basic skills training at a local rehibilitation service agency, a client judged "job ready" is placed on the job with an ARC trainer. The trainer assumes all responsibility for instruction and remains with the client until necessary skills are acquired. ARC even pays part of the trainee's wages during this period. If at the end of training the employer is satisfied with the trainee's performance, he can hire him. if not, he's under no obligation. Once an employer hires an ARC trainee, representatives of the group are always available to assist him if questions or problems arise.

Similar training programs are available in all parts of the country. Employers interested in a free supply of fully trained

*James A. Colbert, Richard A. Kalish, and Potter Chang, "Two Psychological Portals of Entry for Disadvantaged Groups," Rehabilitation Literature, (July 1975).

employees should contact the local Association for Retarded Citizens, public school system, or state vocational rehabilitation agency.

MYTH: ***PRODUCTIVITY***

"I have production standards to meet. If I hire a mentally retarded worker, won't the quality of the product suffer? Won't production rates decline?"

FACT:

No, according to Greg Randall of Randall Plating in Butler, Wisconsin. Mr. Randall will not say how many retarded persons he employs. He refuses to apply such a label to his very competent employees. He *will* admit that he might be accused of "reverse discrimination" in his hiring practices.

"Our business has grown steadily since we first began hiring mentally handicapped persons 10 years ago. The quality of our product has improved and we have substantially fewer rejects Not only that, we haven't had a 'loss of time' injury in years. Frequent injuries had been a tremendous problem in the past."

One problem did surface when mentally handicapped persons were first employed. Mr. Randall began to receive complaints about them from some of his nonhandicapped employees. In examining production logs to determine the validity of the

"Our business has grown steadily since we first began hiring mentally handicapped persons 10 years ago. The quality of our product has improved and we have substantially fewer rejects. Not only that, we haven't had a 'loss of time' injury in years. Frequent injuries had been a tremendous problem in the past."

complaints, Mr. Randall discovered the true source of discord. The "normal" workers wanted to conceal the fact that they were being out-produced by the handicapped workers. Mr. Randall now runs a 4-day, 40-hour work week. He says this is possible because he is assured of a full 10 hours of work from each employee every day.

MYTH: ***ACCIDENTS AND INSURANCE***

"Let's face it: mentally retarded persons are clumsier than other people. And clumsiness means more accidents. Business being what it is today — with profit margins so tight — I have enough to worry about without the added concerns of increased injuries and skyrocketing insurance costs."

FACT:

Sam Polack, President of Hotel Operations, Brock Hotel Corporation, Topeka, Kansas, says it isn't so. Mr. Polack enthusiastically endorses his project with the Menniger Foundation which trains, places, and supervises a group of retarded people employed in various jobs with the Brock Hotel Chain. He said his retarded employees are not only extremely careful but are stable, reliable, hard working, and superior in output. Insurance rates have not increased and the frequency of accidents, if anything, has decreased. He plays down the recent Brock $135,000 grant to the Menninger Foundation which was given to expand the program, by explaining, "It is only good business." "The Hotel Chain," he reports, "will benefit in the long run; they (the retarded workers) are excellent employees. And . . ." he adds . . . "we get a tax break."

MYTH: ***ABSENTEEISM***

"Have you ever been in a restaurant kitchen? To say the pace is hectic is putting it mildly. When someone doesn't show up for work, we really have troubles. I've alredy got a problem with absenteeism. If I can't depend on my regular workers, how can I count on a mentally retarded person to know enough to show up every day?"

FACT:

Many hotel and restaurant kitchens suffer from high rates of employee absenteeism and turnover. This is due to a variety of factors, including the repetitive nature of kitchen utility work. Since mentally retarded people have proven themselves willing and able to perform such work, the Atlantic City Association of Hotel/Casinos decided to see if mentally retarded workers would help to stabilize their kitchen staffs. In cooperation with the Atlantic County Opportunity Center (ACOC), a vocational rehabilitation agency, the Casino Kitchen Project was designed and implemented.

"Job ready" trainees are selected by ACOC staff and groups of four are placed on the job. Job coaches from ACOC are on-site to assist the experienced employees responsible for the

8-weeks of training.

John DePiro, executive steward at Caesar's Palace, says absenteeism among his Kitchen Project employees is very low. When asked what he thought accounted for this, he replied, "Some 'normal' workers feel that if things don't work out here, they can get another job right away down the street. There's not a lot of pressure to succeed. Our ACOC employees don't feel that way. They are glad to be here and enjoy their work. They take pride in conscientious performance on the job." Currently, Mr. DePiro employs ACOC clients on his first and second shifts. Plans are underway to recruit more trainees for the "graveyard" shift in hopes of promoting stabilization there, too.

MYTH: ***TURNOVER***

"It's too expensive for me to be constantly training new employees. Isn't it true that retarded people can't stick with a job?"

FACT:

Marriott Food Services at the Smithsonian Institution has been employing mentally retarded workers for 10 years. Before he became Regional Vice President with Business Food Service, Charles Mills hired some of those early workers, and he became curious as to how they had fared. He chose, at random, 10 names from his files. Mr. Mills' followup yielded some impressive statistics. He found that their *average job turnover was 7.1 years.* Not only that, but average attendance for each of those 7 years was 98%.

"Our mentally retarded employees stay with us and learn their jobs well," says Mr. Haile. "They learn them so well, in fact, that they are able to alternate between several different positions. So we need fewer people to get the job done."

"It is only good business." "The Hotel Chain," he reports, "will benefit in the long run; they (the retarded workers) are excellent employees. And . . ." he adds . . . "we get a tax break."

Bob Haile, an employee of Mr. Mills, is manager of Marriott Food Services in the Natural History Museum. When he started 2½ years ago, he had 10 mentally retarded employees. Now he has 12, although there are fewer job slots available. Job openings haven't decreased because business is slow; they have decreased because employee productivity has increased.

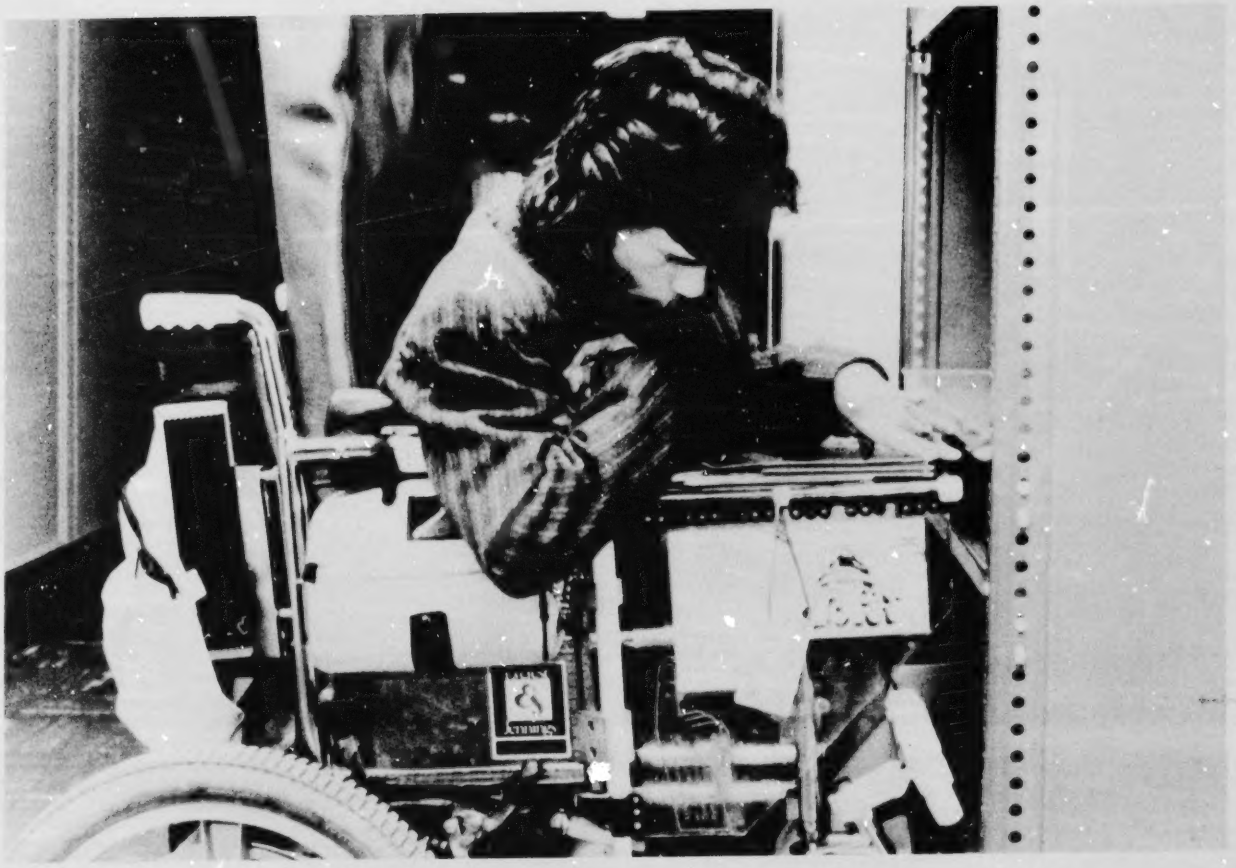
"Our mentally retarded employees stay with us and learn their jobs well," says Mr. Haile. "They learn them so well, in fact, that they are able to alternate between several different positions. So we need fewer people to get the job done."

MYTH: ***SUPERVISION***

"My supervisors have their hands full as it is. I don't know much about mentally retarded people, but I do know that unless you give them a lot of attention, you are going to have problems. I can't accept the responsibility for that kind of problem. I don't have the time or the training to deal with it."

FACT:

Personnel services Manager, Fred Thompson, has been hiring mentally retarded persons for 8 or 9 years now. Through the District of Columbia Association of Retarded Citizens (DC-



ARC), he's hired over 100 people to work in Woodward and Lothrop Department Store's Housekeeping and Food Services Departments.

According to him, a reason for this partnership success is the role played by DC-ARC placement coordinators. These persons help the potential employees with applications and interviews when help is needed. They accompany the employee on his first day on the job. Most important, they remain on-site for as long as necessary and are always available to provide assistance.

"I won't say I have never had a problem with a mentally retarded employee," says Mr. Thompson. "I will say that I don't have any more problems with them than with any other employees. And if I do have a problem with a mentally retarded worker, I can turn to the DC-ARC counselor for help. On-going supportive services like those provided by DC-ARC are something that's not available for other workers."

MYTH: ***MODIFICATIONS***

"I have turned down a couple of government contracts because of Section 503 (of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973) requirements. By the time I made all the modifications required for a handicapped worker, I would have cancelled out any profits from the contract."

FACT:

O-S-C-A-R M-A-Y-E-R spells more than bologna . . . it also spells jobs for mentally retarded and other handicapped people. Pat Beebe, Director of Vocational Education Alternatives, has placed several clients at a company plant in Madison, Wisconsin . . . One is very special.

Oscar Mayer has several contracts with the Federal Government and finds few problems in making modifications to accommodate handicapped workers. "We thought we had real problems when we were asked to employ a 25 year old man with multiple handicaps," reports personnel director Harold Polzer. "He is confined to an electric wheelchair, has practically no use of his hands, and no ability to speak."

"I held off making a decision to hire him in a mail room delivery position until I talked to John Spohn, Vice President and Plant Manager," continued Polzer in a recent interview. Spohn's response was "the company is in the sausage business to make money . . . if the man can do the work — hire him . . . but don't make work . . . don't be patronizing . . . and hire him above minimum wage." Job modifications have been limited to lowering two drop off stations to accommodate the delivery man's sitting position. Deliveries are made to several points in the 5 floor, 2,000 employee plant. Assistance in the cafeteria line at lunch time is provided by willing co-workers. "It is not the type of handicap or even the severity of the handicap that bothers management or fellow employees," added Polzer. "It's the attitude that counts . . . Our man in the wheelchair is a willing worker with a great sense of humor."

"It's the attitude that counts . . . Our man in the wheelchair is a willing worker with a great sense of humor."

Avenues to Employment: Guidelines

Mr. President:

An effect of mental retardation is dependency. The major cause of dependency among the greatest number of mentally retarded citizens is economic.

The testimony presented in the preceding section shows that mentally retarded people can function as full productive members of the nation's workforce. Many already do. To allow all mentally retarded people to achieve this, certain steps must be taken by those persons who work with them or who can benefit from their employment.

We recommend the following aven es to employment. These guidelines would strengthen the partnership between the public and private sectors, and it is vital to their economic independence.

Specific recommendations are directed to each group of concerned individuals or agencies. We solicit your support.

Employers:

1. *The next time you need workers, turn to your local schools or rehabilitation facilities for help.* In some businesses, high turnover rates and resultant shortages for trained workers are a problem. Schools and rehabilitation facilities offer a solution by providing access to a trained, dependable workforce. Employers in all parts of the country have begun to stabilize their labor force through this approach. Contact your local Association for Retarded Citizens for a list of area agencies.

2. *Make your training needs known.* You do not have to wait for a problem before consulting local services agencies. If you anticipate expansion or reorganization, let the agencies know in advance. Tell them how many new job openings you will have, and the skills needed to fill them. Then, when you are ready to hire employees who are trained and ready to work, they will be available.

3. *Help training programs to help you meet your needs. Become a member of an advisory committee.* An advisory committee which is composed of representatives of business and of training facilities serves the purposes of both groups. For business people, it is a forum where their own employment needs and those of the community are addressed. For trainers, it is the primary source of information vital to creating a training program

For example, an advisory committee is a key element in the Projects with Industry (PWI) program, which is administered by the Rehabilitation Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Education. The program goal is to create a partnership between business and service agencies to promote training that leads to employment. RSA figures show this to be a cost effective program. In 1980, 50 projects (serving 7,500 disabled persons) were funded for $5.5 million. More than three quarters of the clients were placed in competitive employment, generating an estimated $35 million in taxable wages in that year.*

4. *Provide subcontract work for sheltered employment.* Some mentally retarded people work in sheltered employment which may be either in a separate shop or in an enclave within industry. In both cases, local industry provides subcontracts in which there are many advantages to the contractor, including reduced overhead and labor costs.

Both Hewlett-Packard and Wright-McGill have been subcontracting with Four Corners Sheltered Workshop in Durango, Colorado, for more than 10 years. Workshop director Allen Jones' business-like approach to the subcontracts has been one reason for their long duration. Mr. Jones does not market Four Corners as a rehabilitation agency offering low-cost work. His prices are competitive with those of other subcontractors. He sells his services on the basis of a quicker turnaround time and lower rate of rejects. So companies get a higher quality product for no extra cost.

5. *Consider purchasing a sheltered workshop.* As an alternative to the above, consider the suggestion of George A. Conn, Commissioner, Rehabilitation Services Administration, made to the Industry Labor Council, The Menninger Foundation, Topeka, Kansas. He suggests that the private sector explore the benefits of corporations purchasing sheltered workshops as wholly-owned divisions. The workshops would have access to increased capital and a steady source of cash flow operations, as well as accelerated depreciation of existing facilities and equipment. Industry would have access to a well-trained and reliable workforce.

6. *Try hiring a mentally retarded worker.* Many employees have discovered the advantages of hiring mentally retarded persons. See if it is not an economic discovery for you, too.

Teachers, Trainers, and Program Administrators

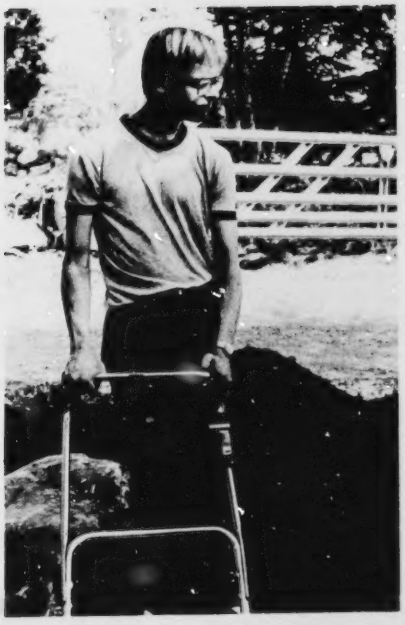
1. *Make your curriculum functional.* Despite legislation which guarantees a free and appropriate education up to the age of 21, many mentally retarded persons leave school each

*U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress,* 1980 (Publication No. E-80-26000).

year lacking even basic self-care and independent living skills.

These deficits are not a result of limited student capabilities but result from inappropriate training. Programs for the mentally retarded are often based upon a developmental curriculum model. Training begins by establishing the student's developmental level and structuring activities which will lead to mastery of the next developmental step. While this approach does provide the sequential, step-by-step instruction needed by mentally retarded learners, an overly strict adherence to developmental sequences may preclude training in skills vital to independent adult functioning. Unfortunately such strict adherence is not uncommon. Its result is that students who are able to stack 4 blocks are trained to stack 5, then 6, and so on. The problem becomes more apparent as degree of retardation increases. Employing a purely developmental approach with a severely retarded student may result in a mere 2-year developmental gain over 18 years of training. This graduate's preschool level skills are woefully inadequate for post-school success.

For an effective curriculum, educators must streamline the developmental approach to focus on those skills necessary in adult life. Such an approach is often referred to as a functional skills curriculum model. Functionality of skills is assured by evaluating each proposed activity in terms of the following question: "If this student cannot do this for himself, will someone else have to do it for him?"* Apply this question to a block-stacking activity and the answer is "no." Apply it to meal preparation and the answer is "yes." When the answer is "yes," the activity is important to the student's future success and should be a component of training.



2. *Make your curriculum relevant.* Even the most thoroughly functional curriculum is of limited value unless it is based upon the characteristics and meets the needs of the local community. While true in all areas of programming, appropriateness is of particular importance in vocational training.

No vocational program should be planned without careful assessment of current and projected community labor needs. A meticulously trained electronics assembler will have little vocational success in an area void of this industry. Although this may seem obvious, it reflects a common tendency in a number of vocational training programs.

Your school system should have a job development and placement specialist. Work with this person to identify potential training and employment. Build your vocational training program around the specific skills necessary to succeed in these sites. Implementation of a relevant and functional curriculum

*Freagon, Sharon, Keynote Address to Office of Special Education Parent Meeting. Washington, D.C., October 1981.

serves not only student needs, but those of the community as well.

3. *Be future-oriented.* Ensuring a functional and relevant curriculum is best achieved by basing it upon the anticipated residential and vocational situations in which students will find themselves as adults. Success here depends once again upon assessment of current and projected community alternatives, as well as on the earliest possible alternatives identification. Formulation of goals which reflect projected options should not be delayed until the secondary level. Preparation should begin at the primary level, though a program emphasis will become increasingly focused on specific skill development, reflecting the emergence and clarification of adult placement options.

4. *Don't underestimate student/client potential.* More than a decade of research demonstrates the vocational potential of persons with even severe levels of retardation.* Yet school programs continue to prepare them only for sheltered employment, if at all. Many adult service systems shuttle retarded citizens into day activity programs, deeming them incapable of even sheltered employment. Clearly, a gap exists between the research and the service delivery system.

Close this gap by disseminating state-of-the-art training information in your school or service system. Assume students to be candidates for competitive employment. By so doing, you will increase competitive placements, and allow space in sheltered shops for those few who want or need it.

Job Development and Placement Specialists

1. *Be a business person, not a charity-seeker.* Since they are not needed, employers should not be asked for handouts. Earlier sections have established that hiring mentally retarded workers is sound business. In some ways, mentally retarded employees are preferable to their nonhandicapped peers. Familiarize yourself with the needs of potential employers and outline ways in which a mentally retarded worker can help to meet these needs. Armed with this information, market your clients as the economic asset they represent.

2. *Never place a worker who is not "job ready."* Word of mouth advertising by employers who have success establishes a good reputation for your program. Conversely dissatisfied employer reports ruin your reputation.

You must create the impression of a competent and reliable business person who stands behind his products. You can go a long way toward building employer confidence by placing only those clients who are fully prepared to meet workplace demands. One success quite likely leads to another.

3. *Provide adequate followup services.* The majority of employers who have discovered the advantages of employing the mentally retarded worker attribute this discovery, in large part, to the on-going support of training and placement personnel.

Everyone is wary of "fly-by-night" operations. Just as you must be business-like in terms of marketing techniques and quality control, you must also be available for service should questions or problems arise. Degree and duration of followup depend upon client needs and employer wishes. Generally, a followup person should be on site when placement is initiated and then phased out in accordance with the criteria mentioned

*Bellamy, G T., Peterson, L. and Close, D., "Habilitation of the Severely and Profoundly Retarded: Illustrations of Competence," *J. Educ. Train. Ment. Ret.*, 10:174-186, 1975.
Gold, M.W., "Stimulus Factors in Skill Training of the Retarded on a Complex Assembly Task: Acquisition, Transfer and Retention," *Am. J. Ment. Defic.*, 76:517-526, 1972.

above. At all times, however, employees should have access to followup services. Knowing this support is available can ease the apprehensions of a first-time employer.

4. *Coordinate your efforts with those of other local service agencies.* You should not expect a warm reception from an employer who has been deluged with placement requests from every area service agency. Most communities have a variety of education and rehabilitation programs concerned with placing mentally retarded workers, while few have a means of coordinating placement programs.

Solve this problem by establishing a joint advisory committee with representatives from all local agencies and businesses. Such a committee could inform agencies of job openings while offering employers a source of qualified applicants. Besides coordinating placement better, the committee increases communication among the agencies, which minimizes service duplication and maximizes the benefits garnered for every dollar of funding.

5. *Obtain the approval of top management.* A Nebraska training and placement program for moderately retarded young adults documented the job development efforts of its placement specialist. Data revealed that an average of 40 employer visits and 20 followup visits yielded one monthly competitive placement. A pilot project in Los Angeles, on the other hand, arranged to place 45 moderately and severely physically handicapped individuals in competitive public sector jobs through direct dealings with the mayor.*

Stanley J. Bryer, of the Jewish Employment and Vocational Service's Projects with Industry, St. Louis, Missouri, offers one reason for these differing results. He notes that, particularly in a large company, decisionmaking and action are two distinctly separate processes. A personnel officer may not feel empowered to assume the responsibility entailed in deciding to hire a mentally retarded worker. The authority is executive; thus, an executive must be asked to make the decision.

Obviously, as job development productivity increase, placement productivity also probably increases. To assure a successful and cost-effective program, include top-level executives on all advisory committees. Their cooperation will greatly facilitate your job development efforts.

Parents

1. *Raise your expectations.* Maybe like many others you were told from the beginning not to expect too much from your child. This advice may have come from friends, relatives, educators or health professionals. It was meant to help, to protect you from

*Albin, T. J., Stark, J. A. and Keith, K. D., "Vocational Training and Placement: Behavior Analysis in the Natural Environment." In G. T. Bellamy, G. O'Connor, and D. C. Karan (eds.), *Vocational Rehabilitation of Severely Handicapped Persons.* Baltimore: University Park Press, 1979.

disappointment. Research on training methods has proven them wrong. Even severely handicapped persons can acquire skills generally assumed beyond their capabilities, including employment skills.

Familiarize yourself with the latest training developments and adjust your expectations accordingly. Believe in your child and he will believe in himself.

2. *Make sure all programs will meet adult needs.* Even 18 years of public education is a limited time in which to learn independent adult functioning. Let none of this precious time be lost. Participate in Individualized Education Plan (IEP) conferences and monitor all programs. Be sure that they include the self-help, daily living and vocational skills essential to adult life. Make these skills a priority. Many retarded adults lead full and independent lives without learning to read; few lead such lives when unable to care for themselves.

3. *Foster a spirit of home-school cooperation.* Both you and the teacher share a common goal helping your child reach full potential. Mutual idea and responsibility sharing hastens goal achievement.

Work with every teacher. Find out what can be done at home to reinforce training programs while letting the teacher know how goals at home can be reinforced at school. The more coordinated your efforts, the greater the likelihood of success.

4. *Accept risk-taking.* Perhaps the most difficult problem is taking the risks necessary to the development of an independent life style. Certainly, perils are present with that first solo bus ride, so were they in your first bus ride, as in many of your first activities. You accepted the risk because it was necessary for your growth. Allow your child to take risks for the same reason.

5. *Be a promoter.* Many recent gains in educational and employment rights have come through the efforts of people who act as promoters for retarded citizens. The trend toward shifting authority from the federal to state level may result in regulation changes and legislation which supports these rights.

Monitor federal and state legislation proposals to stay aware of contemplated changes. Join with others in providing input to state and federal lawmakers. Assist them in their attempts at change to assure that the needs of mentally retarded persons will be met.

Mentally Retarded Persons

1. *Don't be afraid to ask questions.* Some people do not like to ask for help when they need it. They think that by asking they will appear stupid. They would rather just blunder on, hoping that everything turns out all right. When people behave this way on a job, they risk making mistakes which cost an employer both time and money. They can cost the person who made the mistake his job. A competent person is one who knows when he needs help. Do not be afraid to turn to your

supervisor whenever you have a question. He'll thank you for it.

2. *Prove yourself on the job.* It may not be fair, but it is a fact you will have to face. Your supervisor and co-workers might be watching your job performance more closely than that of another new employee. Even though you have been hired, they might not be quite sure that you can do the job. You know you can measure up; it is up to you to prove it. Not just for your own sake but for the sake of all people like you who are trying to find work. Be on time and come to work every day. Work hard and get the job done. Be neat and well groomed. Make sure you are always pleasant and polite. Show everyone that you are not only as good as any other worker, you are better.

3. *Find out where to turn for help.* What if you find you are having problems on the job? Who should you talk to?

When you first start a new job, get the name of a person at work who can assist you if you are having difficulties. You should be able to get this name either from your employer or from your placement counselor. Go to this person whenever you have a question about your work, a problem with another worker, or any other concern pertaining to your job.

What if you are having a problem outside your job? Or what if you are having trouble with the person at work who is supposed to help you? Before you leave your school or training program, find out who to contact when difficulties arise that cannot be handled on the job. If you are having problems with transportation, if you lose your job, or if you would like a new job, for instance, you will need an outside source of advice. Your outside contact could be a particular person such as your teacher or placement counselor or it could be an agency such as your school or local Association for Retarded Citizens. Just make sure you know whom to call and when you should call them.

4. *Learn how to assert yourself.* Some mentally retarded people find it difficult to speak out for themselves. This is because others have always spoken for them. Many mentally retarded people are tired of having other people tell them what to do and what to think, where to work and where to live. Although it is important to accept the help of teachers, counselors, friends, and family, it is also important to learn to be responsible for yourself. Mentally retarded people are learning to do this by joining groups made up of handicapped persons who speak for themselves.

Two such groups are "People First" and "United Together." Ask your teacher or counselor for information about these or similar groups.

Federal, State, and Local Governments

1. *Reduce lack of incentive for employment.* Many mentally retarded persons are eligible for income assistance through either Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Beneficiaries are also eligible for Medicare or Medicaid.

A mentally retarded person must make some serious choices when considering employment. Can he afford to lose the income support? Perhaps more importantly, will the potential employer provide health insurance which equals current coverage? Many of the entry level positions for which a mentally retarded worker qualifies offer no health benefits at all. Such concerns may discourage a handicapped person from accepting employment.* The Social Security Disability Amendments of 1980 attempted to reduce these disincentives by extending entitlement periods and relaxing re-entitlement requirements for income and health benefits. Will such changes provide adequate security to a beneficiary considering employment? Section 505 of the Social Security Amendments allows modifications of existing benefit provisions in certain demonstration projects designed to test the effects of various alternatives.* Plans for such programs are already formulated. Their careful implementation, and examination of results, should indicate what direction the entitlement programs must take to offer employment incentives rather than disincentives. Congress should take note of these findings.

2. *Support programs leading to employment.* Funds available for vocational training are shrinking. We can no longer afford to support programs which are not cost-effective.

A cost effective vocational training program is one which

*Berkley Planning Associates. *Analysis of Policies of Private Employers Toward the Disabled.* Final Report to Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C., November 1981

*Krute, A. and Freitel, R., "Reintegration of the Severely Disabled into the Work Force: The United States Experience." *Social Security and Disability Studies Research Report No. 17,* April 1981.

culminates in employment. Depending on the clients served, employment might be sheltered or competitive, full or part time, minimum or less than minimum wage. In every case, however, it reflects increased client earning power.

The New Federalism initiative gives state governments the responsibility to allocate funds. Many advocates are concerned that this will result in the elimination of the set-asides and excess cost provisions mandated by the Vocational Education Act, as amended, (PL 94-482). Such provisions are necessary in order to maintain appropriate vocational programs that lead to employment. To dispel the fears of advocates, and to assure continuation of cost-effective programs, states should develop policies which reflect the training and employment needs of handicapped people.

3. *Gather and disseminate information on research and model programs.* If a service agency wishes to develop an effective employment training program, where should it turn for technical assistance? If a mentally retarded person is seeking employment, who should be approached for advice? Such information is best obtained for someone who has been proven successful in these areas.

In the preparation of this report, it was evident that while many exemplary programs exist, locating them is not an easy task. Considerable expense results when every service agency or individual requiring such information must repeat the same time-consuming process.

Both federal and state government agencies could generate significant savings by gathering information and providing access to a central data source. The President's Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives has developed a computerized Projects Bank programed with outstanding examples of private sector initiatives. The National Alliance of Business, under contract to the U.S. Department of Labor, operates a clearinghouse on employment and training programs. If the Department of Education or Department of Labor were to expand this effort to focus on model employment and training programs, increased integration of people with mental retardation and the workforce would be effectively achieved.

4. *Promote cooperative efforts among service agencies.* Every community has a variety of agencies concerned with the employment needs of handicapped people. Common examples are vocational rehabilitation services, special education programs, and vocational education programs. Although these agencies share a common goal, they often function quite independently of one another, with little or no interagency contact. This fragmented service model results in unnecessary duplication of services, making them more costly to the community and less effective in employment outcomes.

Avenues of communication must be opened so that all public and private agencies in an area can coordinate services to

maximize effectiveness, in terms of both costs and outcomes. Cooperation should extend beyond the area of training, to include identification of local labor needs, employer outreach, job placement, and followup.

5. *Maintain current financial incentives for employers of handicapped workers.* There is widespread concern about the escalating costs of social service programs. In attempting to harness these costs, however, we must guard against being "pennywise and pound foolish."

Many employers of mentally retarded people were initially convinced to consider such an option because of attractive financial packages combining tax credits and training subsidies. Any new legislation affecting such credits and subsidies should insure that they are maintained.

Estimates of dependency costs for out-of-work retarded persons range from $20.00 per day, or $7,300 per year, to $200.00 per day, or $73,000 per year, for those residing in public residential facilities.* The dollars spent to employ retarded persons save us many future dollars.

---

*Department of Psychoeducational Studies, College of Education, University of Minnesota and National Association of Superintendents of Public Residential Facilities for the Mentally Retarded, 1981.

Post Script: "The Future"

Forecasts of employment opportunities in jobs that mentally retarded people do well look very bright. Burt Nanus, an internationally respected futurist researcher, in a report to the President's Committee seven years ago, stated that "Service jobs suitable to the skills of mentally retarded people would continue to grow." Basing his projections on known consumer needs, an analysis of 1974 trends, plus the works of such leading scholars as Daniel Bell and J. K. Galbraith, Nanus reports "The U. S. labor force is moving progressively from work with the hands to work with the brain." He went on to explain that, in terms of jobs for the mentally retarded worker, things were optimistic; new jobs would go to the higher educated, freeing other jobs for currently underemployed workers and thus freeing positions at the less skilled end of the spectrum for the retarded worker.*

The types of jobs Nanus targeted as being available to mentally retarded workers included food services, laboratory assistants, employees for recycling plants, health service assistants, and assistants in day care centers for children and the aged. In part, Nanus' forecasts of 7 years ago have materialized.

More recently, Mary Meyer, a consultant in Human Resources and Manpower Systems, has made forecasts similar to Dr. Nanus'. She reports that a declining birth rate will produce a drastic shortage of workers by 1990. She explains the

current 10% unemployment rate as temporary, being caused primarily by overproduction. She states, "Our major problem is poor manpower planning. We load up now, produce all we can, and, when we overproduce, we wind up in a recession because we never plan a balanced system where input equals output."

Basing part of her forecasts on the work of David Snyder, Dr. Meyer believes that by 1990 the country will have to import guest workers. (Nanus makes similar forecasts.) She believes the subject of discrimination in the work place "will fly out the window by force, not law . . . " Meyer said (despite biases), "Employers are going to have to capitalize on older employees, female employees, black and other minorities, retarded and other handicapped employees, and all the rest."

A survey of employers conducted by the President's Committee on Mental Retardation also supports Dr. Nanus' forecasts in terms of the types of jobs mentally retarded people do well.

If Dr. Meyers' forecasts of the need to bring in guest workers is accepted, then the recommendation in this report to start training mentally retarded students to perform service, office and factory work is well made. It will result in building a ready workforce and reduce the need to look outside our boundaries for workers.

The preceding document, although a report to the President, is much more. It is sound advice to those responsible for the Nation's production of goods and services. It is sound advice about an exceptional class of workers. It is sound advice based upon the testimony of employers and vocational training and placement specialists.

People determine the future. Trends indicate it will be bright for the majority of the nation's population. Special attention to the potential contributions of special people, will make it bright for them, too.

---

*Burt Nanus, "Living and Working in the Year 2,000", *The Year 2,000 and Mental Retardation*, Stanley Plog and Miles Santamour, Ed., Plenum Press, N.Y., 1980.

*Mary Meyer, President, Cheshire Ltd. in an interview with UPI appearing in The Arizona Republic, 4/18/82 and in an interview with Miles Santamour, PCMR, 6/9/82.

Credits:
Authors: Miles B. Santamour and Amy Crane

Manuscript Review:
Julius Cohen
Charles Inlander
John Fanning
Roxanne Flanagan
Kenneth Collins
Members and Staff of PCMR